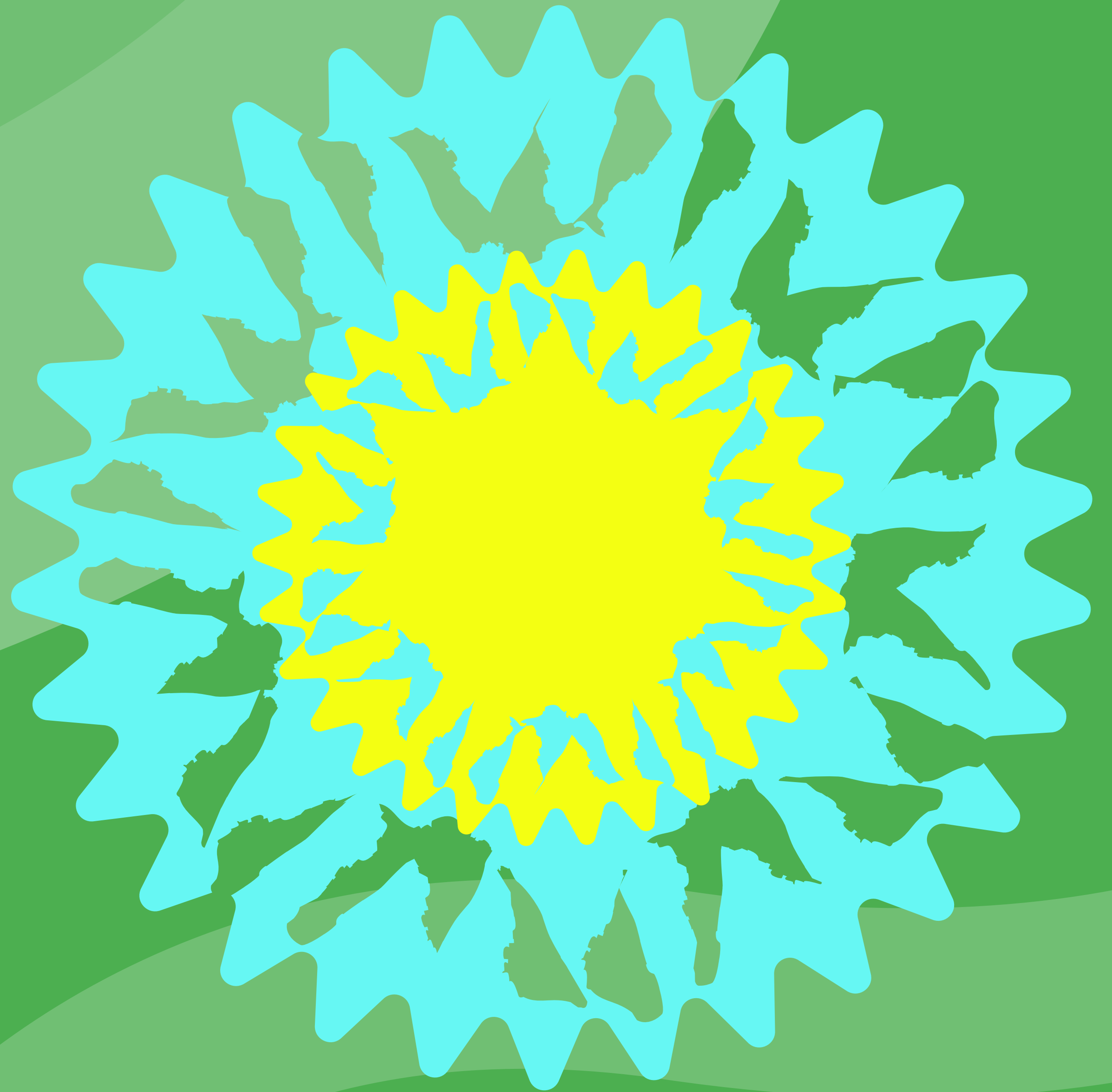


**2019-2020 OACAS Annual Report**  
Cultivating Change  
in Child Welfare



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

## **2019-2020 OACAS Annual Report**

# Cultivating Change in Child Welfare

## **Executive Message**

The past year at the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) was one dedicated to renewal: renewing our priorities, our partnerships, and the way we do our work to better meet the needs of our member Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies who serve children, youth, and families of Ontario. We focused on continuing to lay the groundwork for on-going transformational change of child welfare, as well as nurturing the strong programs and projects already underway.

In the second year of our five-year strategic plan to reimagine child welfare in Ontario, we worked alongside our members and the broader children's services sector, achieving new levels of responsiveness and a renewed focus on striving for excellence in all our work. During this first full year of Nicole Bonnie's tenure as Chief Executive Officer at OACAS, we spent time reviewing our past achievements and our challenges in order to evaluate the changes necessary to move us toward our goal of a system that is rooted in the principles of equity, transparency, consistency, and innovation.

We are not yet where we want to be as an organization or a system. But this work requires collaboration and determined effort on the part of child welfare leadership, member agency staff, and our trusted partners across sectors. Together, we are committed to continuing to cultivate a system that works for all children, youth, and families in Ontario.

Toward the end of the 2019-2020 year, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were challenged to continue to meet the needs of our province's children, youth, and families, while adhering to strict health and safety protocols to keep them and our member agency frontline child welfare staff protected. We rose to the occasion, developing pandemic-related communications plans, resources, and virtual learning opportunities, and disbursing personal protective equipment to our sector and beyond. But the pandemic, which has pushed already vulnerable populations even further beyond the margins, has also reminded us of the fragility of our system and the need to continue to address the barriers and chronic challenges that lead to child welfare involvement.

This annual report focuses on our key achievements and highlights by answering the question: in 2019-2020, how did we support better outcomes for children, youth, and families in Ontario?

These achievements would not be possible without the leadership and contributions of the OACAS Board of Directors, our member Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies and their staff, OACAS staff, and our various stakeholders and partners across sectors. We are especially grateful to the families, communities, and in particular the young people in and from care who hold us accountable and push us to do better. We will continue to expand on our successes and learn from our past, so that we can develop and nurture a system that allows all Ontario children, youth, and families to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NB' followed by a stylized flourish.

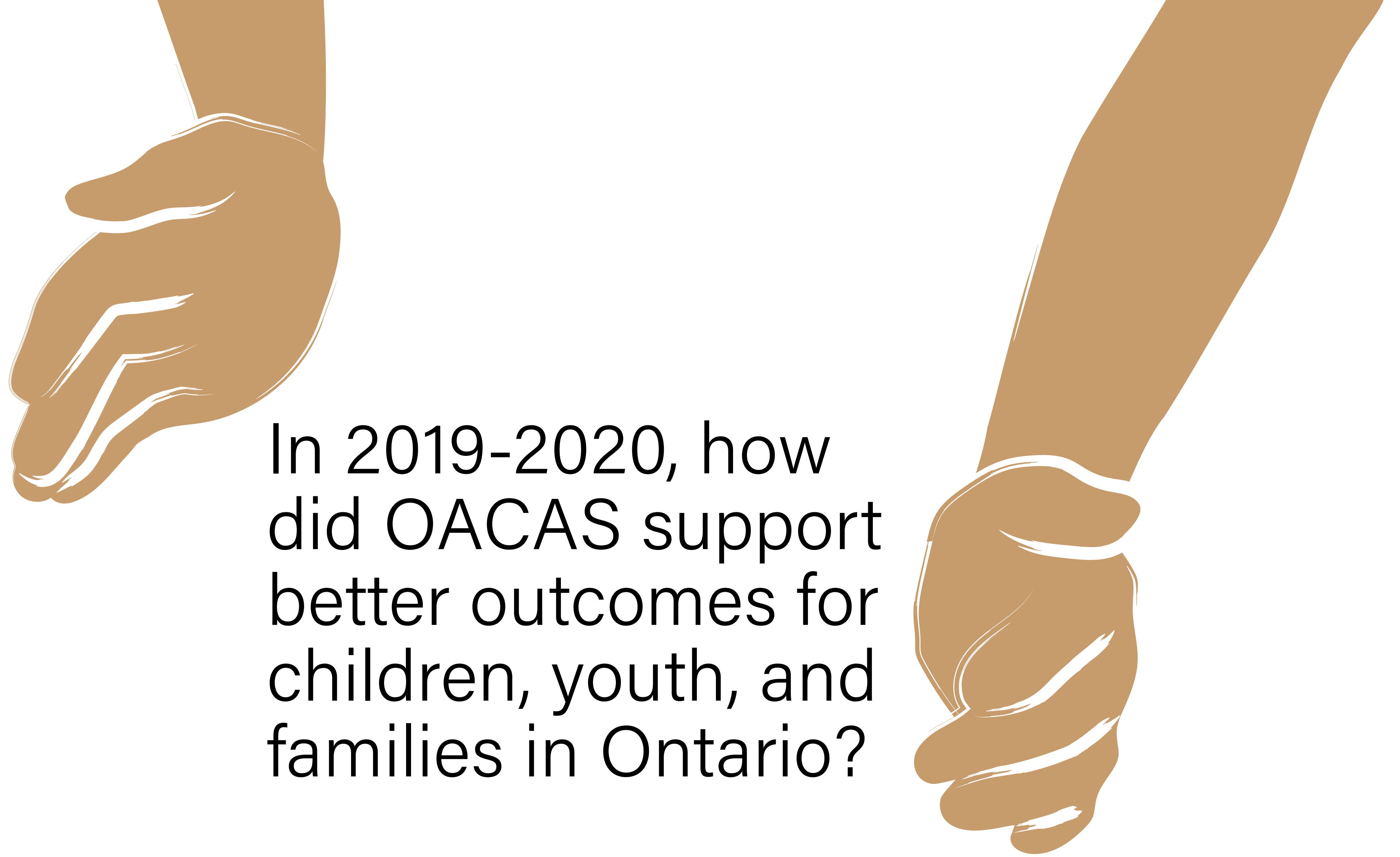
**Nicole Bonnie**  
CEO, OACAS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Sarsfield'.

**Lisa Sarsfield**  
Chair, OACAS Board of Directors

**2019-2020  
Achievements  
and Highlights**

In 2019-2020, how  
did OACAS support  
better outcomes for  
children, youth, and  
families in Ontario?



# We engaged with youth to ensure their voices and lived experiences informed our work.



No one understands the impacts of the child welfare system better than children and youth with lived experience. A key pillar of the OACAS five-year strategic plan is the respect and empowerment of children and youth to make their own decisions about their lives and the services they receive from Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies. It is critical that as the child welfare system evolves, that we listen to, reflect on, and share the voices of young people in all aspects of our work.

**Listening to youth  
is rooted in our work.**



## **Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:**

### **Youth for Change Steering Committee**

The OACAS Youth for Change Steering Committee is made up of thirty-two former youth in care who meet regularly to provide feedback and input on OACAS projects, initiatives, and youth programming. This year, the Committee participated in important sector redesign and change management work, as well as contributed to the planning of two youth conferences and one provincial day of awareness and celebration.

### **Events for Youth**

The YouthCAN team, in partnership with the Youth for Change Steering Committee and Children's Aid Society youth champions, organized several events for youth, including the 13th Annual YouthCAN Conference, Children and Youth in Care Day, and our annual Dress Purple Day. These events provided opportunities for youth to do direct advocacy, learn new skills, and have a platform to tell their own stories.

### **Aftercare Benefits Initiative**

The Aftercare Benefits Initiative (ABI), a one-of-a-kind benefit program for former youth in care, celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2019. Over the last five years, 2,584 youth and 401 dependent children have been enrolled in the program.

In 2019-2020, ABI offered health, dental, vision care, counselling, and life skills support services to over 1,800 former youth in care and their 300+ dependent children. Another 300+ youth who did not qualify for the full scope of benefits had access to the counselling and life skills portion of the program.

OACAS continues to advocate on behalf of youth and former youth in care to ensure the ABI program is accessible, supportive, and comprehensive in its coverage.

# We developed and delivered curriculum to better prepare child welfare staff for the work they do.

It is critical that child welfare professionals have the knowledge, expertise, and tools to do their work in ways that best support and are least harmful to the vulnerable and marginalized communities they serve. In 2019-2020, OACAS Learning continued their focus on developing training that centres on deepening learners' knowledge and understanding of concepts of equity, systemic racism, and oppression in child welfare. At the end of the year, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread, the team was quick to develop and launch processes to ensure child welfare staff could continue to access all aspects of their educational training virtually.



**Continuous learning  
is rooted in our work.**

## **Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:**

### **Equity in Child Welfare Training**

OACAS Learning delivered its 3-day intensive Equity in Child Welfare training session to more than 900 child welfare executives, leaders, and frontline staff. The training aims to expand participants' knowledge and understanding of equity issues in the Ontario child welfare system. The curriculum supports the development of equity practice skills to address systemic issues of racism and oppression, which cause disparity of service for marginalized communities and lead to the overrepresentation of Indigenous and African Canadian children, youth, and families in the child welfare system.

### **Reimagined Child Welfare Pathway to Authorization Series**

The *Reimagined Child Welfare Pathway to Authorization Series* for new frontline child protection workers was designed to include a greater focus on equity, issues of overrepresentation, disparity of outcomes, and disproportionality in the child welfare system, and the groups that most often face these barriers including Indigenous people, African Canadians, those who live in poverty, those who identify as LGBTQ2S+, and immigrants. The training, which is required for all new child protection workers across the province, was launched in January 2020 and sixty-six workers enrolled in seven series across the province in the last quarter of the year.

### **Library Guides**

OACAS's 30 library guides, which provide curated information and resources for child welfare professionals, were visited 17,000 times and more than 1,000 articles were accessed through three research databases.



We supported our members to deliver more equitable services and address the overrepresentation of African Canadian and Indigenous children and youth in care.



As a system, child welfare in Ontario has acknowledged that we must do more to address the overrepresentation of African Canadian and Indigenous children and youth in care. We know that children, youth, and families that come from the most marginalized and vulnerable communities are those most likely to encounter the child welfare system and have the poorest outcomes. We are committed as a sector to changing this.

**Addressing overrepresentation, racism, and disparate outcomes is rooted in our work.**

## Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:

### Phase III of One Vision One Voice

Funding for Phase III of the One Vision One Voice (OVVO) program was secured, and a new toolkit was developed for Children's Aid Societies (CAS) to further support the implementation of the 11 Race Equity Practices to better serve African Canadian children, youth, and families. Planning for Phase III began, which will include events for Black youth and child welfare professionals, capacity building strategies for CAS leaders to address racism at all levels of their organizations, and further engagement of the African Canadian community groups.

### Strengthening Partnerships to Support Reconciliation Work

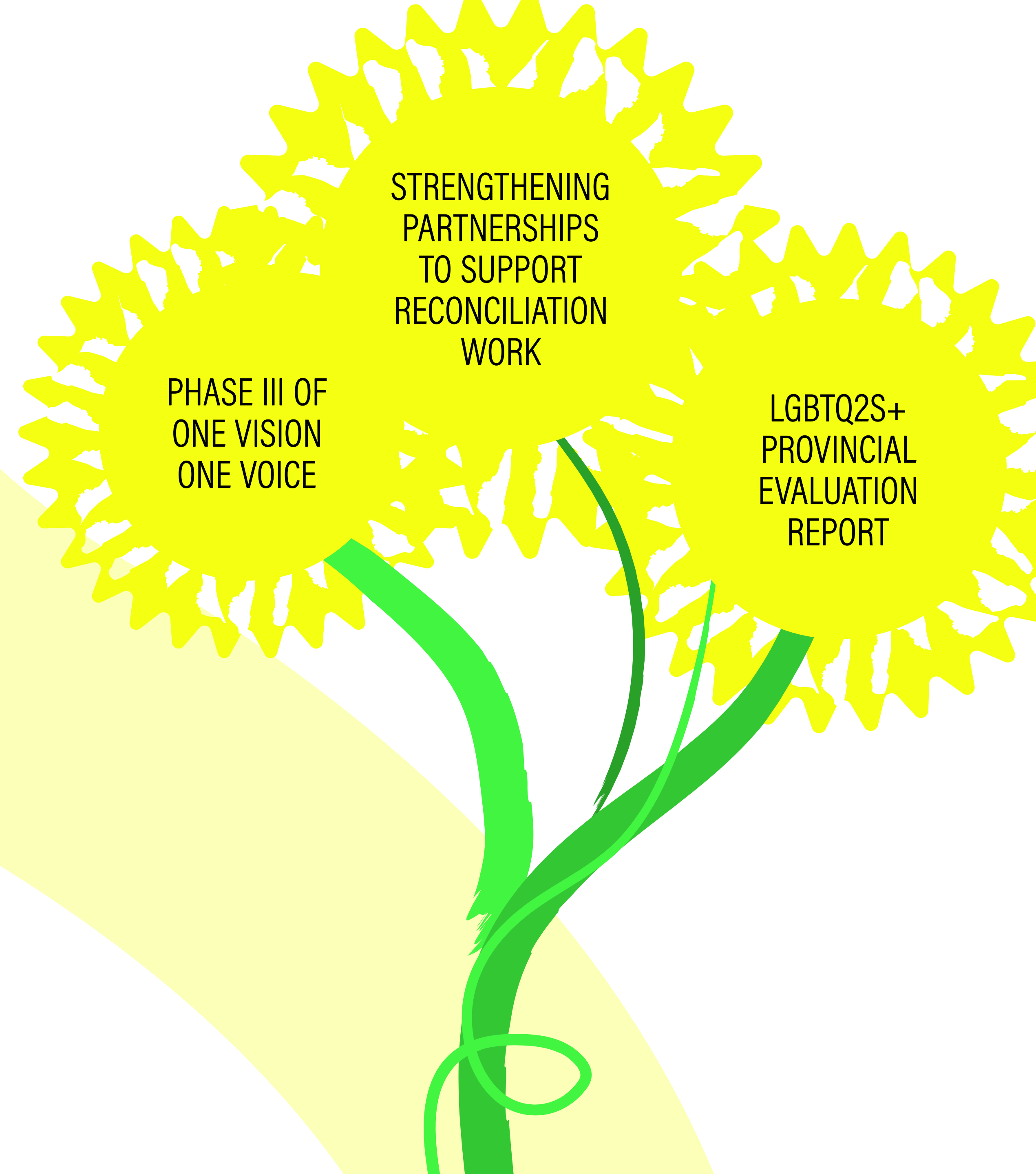
We deepened and strengthened our important relationship with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) and developed new relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leadership organizations in Ontario, including the Chiefs of Ontario, the Tungasuvvingat Inuit, and the Métis Nation of Ontario. We recognize that it is vital that our on-going Reconciliation work be deeply informed and directed by the voices of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and leadership.

OACAS worked closely with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners, government stakeholders, and member agencies to support the analysis and understanding of Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. We hosted a panel for members and Indigenous partners to discuss local implementation and implications of the Bill for Indigenous communities in Ontario and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies who serve those communities.

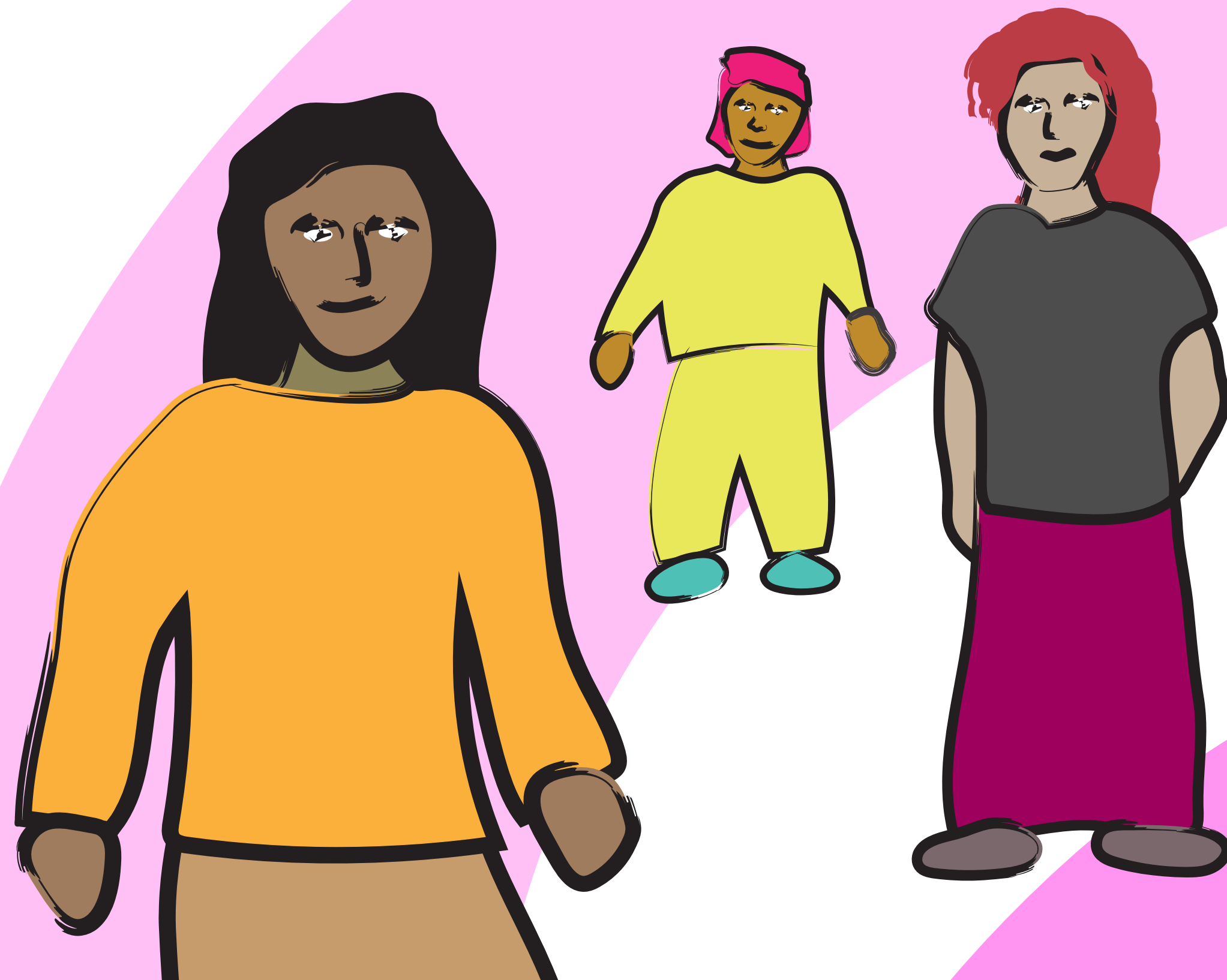
(Key achievements cont.)

### **LGBTQ2S+ Provincial Evaluation Report**

In 2018, the OACAS LGBTQ2S+ Committee developed an online self-assessment tool to evaluate the readiness and capacity of Children's Aid Societies to provide effective, affirming, and equitable services to gender and sexually diverse children, youth, and families. Thirty-nine of 50 Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies completed the assessment and received individual reports focused on three benchmark areas: governance/leadership, environment/climate, and service delivery. This year, a provincial evaluation report summarizing the findings was written. It includes an analysis of the aggregate findings, recommendations to build agency capacity to continue to support LGBTQ2S+ children, youth, and families, and extends the understanding of the landscape of child welfare services with respect to LGBTQ2S+ services. The final report will be released in Fall 2020.



# We led and supported system changes to better serve Ontario children, youth, and families.



In order to achieve a reimagined child welfare system that meets the needs of all our province's children, youth, and families, the existing system must undergo significant transformational change. In 2019-2020, OACAS worked closely with our members, government partners, and community stakeholders to ensure the child welfare system continues to evolve through new protocols, programs, and services.

**Guiding transformative change  
is rooted in our work.**



# Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:

## Shared Services

The Shared Services Program (SSP) completed its agreement with its government funders, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, with the delivery of 12 service streams, including one groundbreaking after-hours call answering and screening pilot, and a back-office feasibility study. We gathered critical feedback from members and engaged in continuous evaluation of all aspects of the Shared Services Program in order to continue building towards a sustainable program for the future.

Toward the end of the year, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SSP leveraged existing infrastructure, including procurement services, to obtain and distribute critical personal protective equipment (PPE) to child welfare agencies and communities across Ontario.

With the support of the OACAS Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) team, 100% of non-Indigenous child welfare agencies are now sharing one provincial child protection information network. The CPIN Operations Team also made progress toward improving CPIN effectiveness for users, including reducing duplicate records, improving the search function, and aligning the system with Part X compliance standards. We will continue to partner with members closely to move this work forward and ensure it supports positive system change.

(Key achievements cont.)

**Part X: Privacy Framework**

On January 1, 2020, Part X of the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act (CYFSA) came into force, creating a new access and privacy framework for Ontario’s child and family services sector. Part X enshrines the right for individuals to access their personal information and establishes rules for service providers regarding the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information. Along with the Part X Project Team and child welfare sector experts, OACAS led sector change management and readiness efforts for Part X to ensure a consistent provincial approach to its application.

**Sector Communications and Issues Management**

This past year, we improved the way we approached communications and issues management as a sector by fostering increased collaboration with member agencies. We provided robust and responsive support in developing and delivering strong public messaging about how child welfare was responding to critical issues. We cultivated key relationships with partners across sectors to better support our communications with Ontarians about issues affecting children, youth, and families.

**Modernization Table Representation**

In 2019, the Ontario government began the process toward modernizing the province’s child welfare system. OACAS worked with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to ensure the representation of various groups in the ongoing modernization discussions, including Children’s Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies, youth in and from care, and members of the African Canadian community. We also developed new—and strengthened existing—relationships with partners in all levels of government in order to support more effective advocacy for positive system change.

We continued to work toward consistent, excellent service delivery informed by evidence across the province.



Children, youth, and families should expect to receive the same high quality of service from Children's Aid Societies, regardless of where they live in Ontario. Alignment across child welfare agencies and with other social service providers is critical to building consistency, and ultimately trust, in the provincial child welfare system.

**Delivering consistent services  
is rooted in our work.**

## Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:

### Anti-Human Trafficking Strategies

Human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is prevalent in Ontario and significantly impacts the safety and well-being of children and youth. Because children and youth involved with child welfare are at increased risk for recruitment, it is an ongoing priority. OACAS continued to provide provincial leadership to the Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation Work Group, including setting priorities and implementing recommendations made by the group in the report *Human Trafficking: A Child Welfare Concern*. OACAS also convened several learning opportunities on the subject, including a facilitated discussion with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and with representation from the sector's senior counsel and service leads about ways to strengthen provincial responses to sex trafficking, a presentation from the Office of the Children's Lawyer about the use of restraining orders, and a dedicated library guide. Most notably, OACAS submitted a Phase 1 business case strategy to MCCSS and the Solicitor General to address human trafficking in the child welfare sector.

### New Interagency Protocol

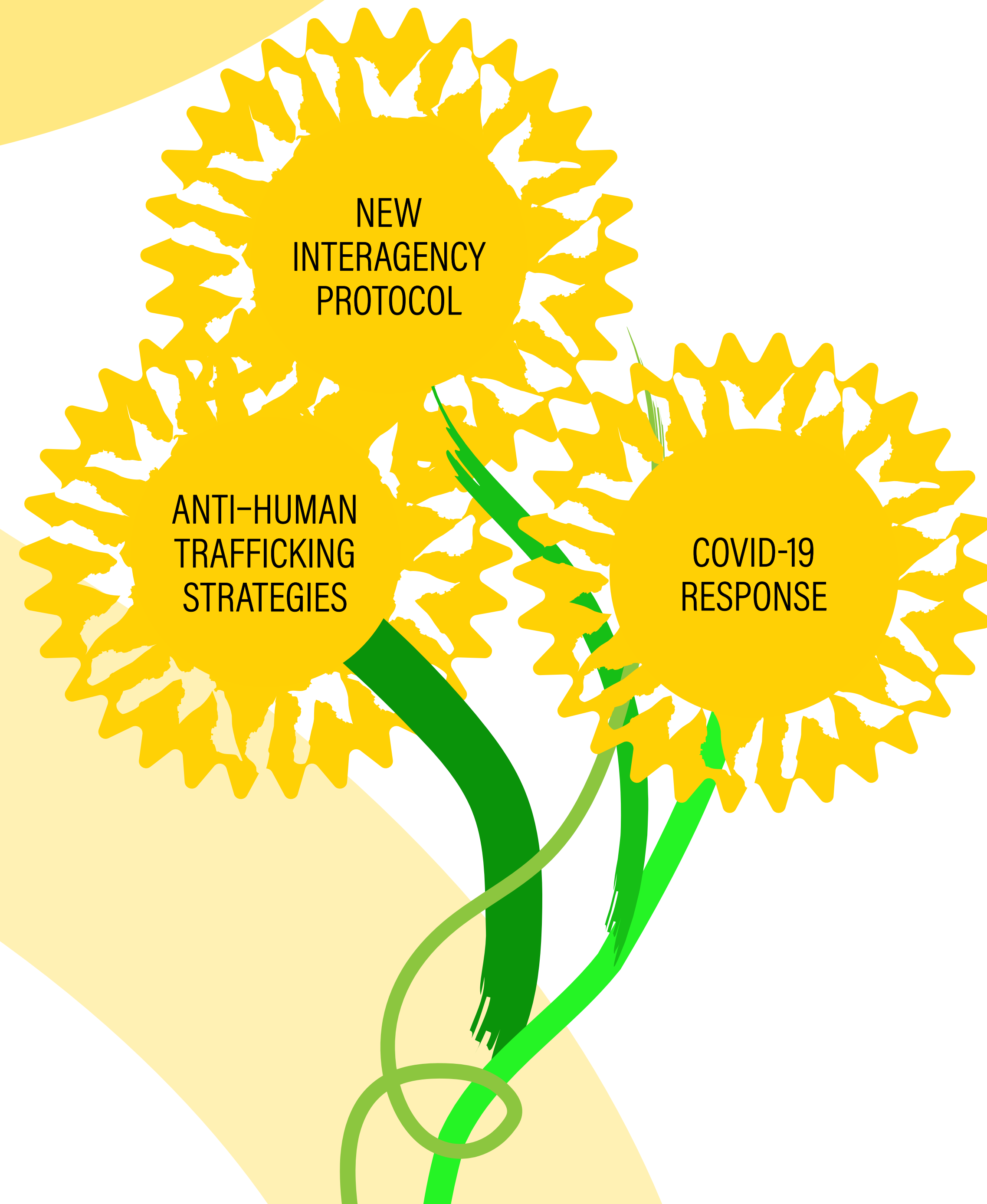
OACAS worked with member agencies through various working groups and committees to develop and launch a new Interagency Protocol (IAP) on January 1, 2020. The IAP outlines expectations for the provision of collaborative service delivery when children, youth, and families in receipt of child welfare services in Ontario move from one jurisdiction to another. The new IAP emphasizes the principle that child and youth safety should never be compromised because of administrative delays or inter-jurisdictional disagreements. To further support the sector, OACAS held a webinar and OACAS Learning created an e-Learning course to orient the sector to the new IAP. A total of 932 individuals completed the *Interagency Protocol – Orientation* course from December 2019 to March 2020.



(Key achievements cont.)

### **COVID-19 Response**

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, OACAS responded swiftly to public health and safety concerns to support Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies to continue to do their work and protect their communities' most vulnerable children, youth, and families. We developed a COVID-19 Task Force to monitor the pandemic and develop recommendations to the child welfare sector and created enhanced communications with the sector to ensure agencies were responding quickly, consistently, and with the safety and well-being of their clients, staff, and partners in mind.



**OACAS**  
**Board of Directors**  
**2019-2020**

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Chair

**Margaret Bowman**

Past Chair

**Don McKay**

Vice-Chair

**Sherwin Knight**

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**Rav Bains**

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(Guelph-Wellington)

**Ela Smith**

Agency Board Director  
(London and Middlesex)

# OACAS

## Balance Sheet

Year ended March 31, 2020, with  
comparative information for 2019

|                                          | 2020         | 2019          |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Assets</b>                            |              |               |
| <b><i>Current assets</i></b>             |              |               |
| Cash                                     | \$ 2,513,905 | \$ 1,152,166  |
| Accounts receivable                      | 2,276,759    | 3,864,110     |
| Prepaid deposits and expenses            | 21,513       | 50,723        |
|                                          | 4,812,177    | 5,066,999     |
| Capital assets                           | 4,899,249    | 5,100,652     |
|                                          | \$ 9,711,426 | \$ 10,167,651 |
| <b>Liabilities and Fund Balances</b>     |              |               |
| <b><i>Current liabilities</i></b>        |              |               |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | \$ 3,084,507 | \$ 2,266,979  |
| Deferred revenue                         | 395,527      | 1,737,827     |
| Credit facilities                        | 882,186      | 960,798       |
|                                          | 4,362,222    | 4,965,604     |
| Long-term portion of credit facilities   | 1,304,068    | 1,361,274     |
| <b><i>Fund balances</i></b>              |              |               |
| Invested in capital assets               | 2,712,995    | 2,778,580     |
| Externally restricted                    | 123,290      | 133,202       |
| Unrestricted                             | 1,208,851    | 928,991       |
|                                          | 4,045,136    | 3,840,773     |
|                                          | \$ 9,711,426 | \$ 10,167,651 |

# OACAS

## Statement of Revenue and Expenses

Year ended March 31, 2020, with  
comparative information for 2019

|                                              | 2020         | 2019          |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>                               |              |               |
| Government of Ontario                        | \$ 9,354,310 | \$ 10,260,262 |
| Shared Services                              | 4,203,104    | 2,820,002     |
| Membership Fees                              | 3,584,627    | 4,043,488     |
| Other revenue                                | 1,005,416    | 981,543       |
| Sales and registration fees                  | 639,079      | 730,392       |
| Donations                                    | 73,930       | 183,763       |
|                                              | 18,860,466   | 19,019,450    |
| <b>Expenses</b>                              |              |               |
| Salaries                                     | \$ 6,711,197 | \$ 8,320,762  |
| Contracted professional services             | 5,459,922    | 3,723,361     |
| Direct contract                              | 2,567,949    | 2,599,641     |
| Employee benefits                            | 1,572,211    | 1,942,433     |
| Office and administration                    | 980,333      | 871,503       |
| Facilities and equipment                     | 394,345      | 424,619       |
| Amortization of capital assets               | 281,928      | 270,220       |
| Business travel and hospitality              | 259,365      | 381,030       |
| Other                                        | 186,868      | 172,981       |
| Loan Interest                                | 95,140       | 99,331        |
| Training development and recruitment         | 74,595       | 125,120       |
| Bursaries and grants                         | 72,250       | 217,163       |
|                                              | 18,656,103   | 19,148,164    |
| Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses | \$ 204,363   | \$ (128,714)  |
| Fund balance, beginning of year              | \$ 3,840,773 | \$ 3,969,487  |
| Fund balance, end of year                    | \$ 4,045,136 | \$ 3,840,773  |





Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

**Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies**

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